

HISTORY OF THE ABIPONES.

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the common error that they should never die at
all were the Spaniards and the jugglers banish-
ed from America; for, to the arms of the for-
mer, and to the arts of the latter, they attribute
the deaths of all their countrymen. A wound
inflicted with a spear often gapes so wide that
it affords ample room for life to go out and
death to come in; yet if the man dies of the
wound, they madly believe him killed, not by
a weapon, but by the deadly arts of the jugglers.
The relations leave no stone unturned, not only
diligently to investigate, but severely to punish
the authors of the death, and of the sorcery.
They are persuaded that the juggler will be
banished from amongst the living, and made to
atone for their relation's death, if the heart and
tongue be pulled out of the dead man's body
immediately after his decease, roasted at the
fire, and given to dogs to devour. Though so
many hearts and tongues are devoured, and
they never observe any of the jugglers die, yet
they still religiously adhere to the custom of
their ancestors, by cutting out the hearts and
tongues of infants and adults of both sexes, as
soon as they have expired. How firmly this
mad notion, that men are killed by magical arts
alone, is rooted in the minds of the Abipones,
you may learn from the following facts, of
which I myself was a spectator. In the

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- 683 colony of St. Ferdinand, a Yaaucaniga, famed
761 amongst his countrymen both for high birth
754 and military prowess, and on that very ac-
count ready for any audacious action, was
much afflicted at the untimely death of his
little daughter. He knew that she had been
weak and diseased from her birth, yet was
fully bent upon finding out the magical au-
thor of her death. A foreign Indian woman
married to an Abipon appeared to him, from the
representations of certain old women, who
bore her a grudge, to be the perpetrator of the
crime. Infuriated by the supposed injury, and
the desire of vengeance, he fell upon the inno-
cent unsuspecting woman at the approach of
night, as she was spinning at the fire; he
pierced her shoulder-blade with a spear with such
force, that the point came out in the middle of
her bosom, and stained the child she was suck-
ling with its mother's blood. The woman was
middle-aged, very fat, and full-breasted. She
swam in her own blood, which spouted from
every vein. The horrid nature of the wound
[757] threatening certain death, the heads of our holy
religion, which she had formerly learnt, were
briefly recalled to her memory; she received
baptism, and was admonished to forgive her
murderer. Having thus attended to the sal-
752 vation of the poor woman's soul, we applied
all our thoughts towards retarding her death,

HISTORY OF THE ABIPONES.

227

discover which of the jugglers it was that had 754
afflicted him with this sickness, was his daily
and nightly endeavour. On this affair he con-
sulted some old women, who pronounced a
Toba, of the name of Napakainchin, to be the
cause of the disease. The sick man imme- 754
diately devotes the accused to death, for the 683
preservation, as he thought, of his own life.
In the dead of the night, he came upon him
unawares, as he was sleeping in his tent; he
plunged the iron point of his spear into his
body, pierced his left side with a powerful
blow, broke two of his ribs, and clove his
shoulder with a weapon. At the cries of the
wounded man, people assembled, whilst the
assassin escaped by flight. We were called to 797
the assistance of the poor wretch. Seeing him 683
bathed in blood, and pierced with three wounds, 754
we imagined that he would expire immediately.
The bystanders told us that unless we removed
him into our house, the person who put him in
this condition would return to dispatch him
with fresh wounds. According to their advice,
he was conveyed into our house. Slipping by
the way out of the hands of the carriers, he fell
to the ground with fresh, and imminent danger
of his life; for he was very large, and of weight
proportionable to such great bulk. The place
where he was laid in our house, as it had

797 neither door nor fastening, was fortified by the
 683 Abipones with hides on every side, that Ycho-
 754 hake might not gain access, if he came to com-
 plete the murder. And, in fact, as the Indians
 foretold, in half an hour, he came furnished with
 a dagger to hasten the death of the dying man;
 but being bravely repulsed by Father Joseph
 Brigniel, whose companion I then was, returned
 without accomplishing his purpose. The
 wounded man was baptized, and by means of
 our cares and medicines, amongst which hen's
 fat was the principal, happily recovered in the
 course of a few weeks. Napakainchin's wife
 and children gladly imitated his example, and
 embraced the Christian religion. A little after,
 the whole family, apprehending fresh danger
 from the same Ychohake, removed to the neigh-
 bouring town of St. Xavier.

683 Do not imagine the history of the sick
 754 and crazy Ychohake finished. After strug-
 gling with the disease for some months, with
 increased suspicions of some witchcraft being
 practised upon him, he took it into his head to
 accuse a woman, supposed to be acquainted
 with the black art, of his ill state of health.
 About mid-day, he attacked the unsuspecting
 female, and as he endeavoured to strike off her
 head, the weapon glanced aside, and cut her
 left cheek, which, falling to her breast with the

HISTORY OF THE ABIPONES.

220

ear hanging to it by a piece of skin, bathed the child at her breast with blood. The smiter was kept off by the people who crowded to the assistance of the woman. I could scarce refrain from tears at the cruel spectacle; but not having it in my power to punish the wretch who had committed the outrage, turned all my attention towards succouring the soul of the outraged. We had a negro somewhat skilled in the art of surgery; him I ordered to sew the cheek in three places to the head, the woman enduring the pricks of the needle without a groan, whilst the rest were filled with horror at the sight. The whole wound was washed with warm urine, anointed with hen's fat, and gently bound with a piece of linen dipped in a decoction of herbs. As no bandages to fasten the linen could be found, I used the girdle which I wore. The whole evening during which this passed, and the next night, the faithful Abipones watched diligently for the security of the woman that she might not sustain any further injury. For that Indian eagerly longed for her death, as the means of procuring the recovery of his own health. But the wound healing sooner than we had expected, the danger that the poor creature could not always remain concealed was removed, by her privately retreat-

683 ing to the town of St. Ferdinand. Divine Pro-
754 vidence seems to have dictated her flight; for
the Cacique Ychoalay, who was absent from
the town at the time of the event, when in-
formed by me of Ychohake's cruelty, and re-
622 quested to restrain his brother, replied that he
683 should come immediately, not to restrain his
754 brother, but to kill that woman, whom he had
long thought infamous for her magic arts, and to
be feared by all. And indeed, being very firm
in his resolves, he would have put his threats
into execution without a doubt, had he found
the woman in the town. For, in former years,
when they wandered up and down the plains,
he turned out of his horde all women suspected
of sorcery, and pierced many of them, though
perhaps perfectly innocent, with a spear, that
they might never deceive any one again; being
often condemned both on the score of credulity
and cruelty.

797 But this bloody tragedy, at length, had a
happy termination. The Indian Ychohake
ceased at length to live and to be feared, and
you will be surprised to hear that one, who, in
his lifetime, had been so mad in his suspicions
of sorcery, grew sane in his last moments.
Having received baptism, at his own desire,
conscious of approaching dissolution he de-